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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Letter dated 10 April 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations Office at Geneva, addressed to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights

I have the honour to refer to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1996/53). On page 23, paragraph 85, of the report, the Special Rapporteur has recounted the case of Flor Contemplacion. The Singapore Government rejects the inaccurate reporting in that paragraph.

The Special Rapporteur had suggested that the Flor Contemplacion case was a case typifying "domestic violence" by the employer and due to "discriminating policies and procedures" of the State. Neither of these claims was established by the facts and evidence of the case. Singapore enforces its laws impartially to Singaporeans and foreigners alike. Its judiciary system is open and transparent. All the facts and relevant documentation of the Contemplacion case were made public and are readily available for the scrutiny of the Special Rapporteur. The Singapore Government will be happy to provide the Special Rapporteur with the necessary information upon request. Regrettably, the Special Rapporteur did not deem it necessary to do so before submitting the report.

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The facts of the Contemplacion case are not in dispute. Flor Contemplacion had murdered another Filipina, Della Maga, and a 4-year-old child, Nicholas Huang, on 4 May 1991. From the time of her arrest by the Singapore police until her petition for clemency to the President of Singapore four years later, Contemplacion did not deny that she had killed Della Maga and Nicholas Huang. Indeed, she voluntarily admitted to the two murders in the presence of a Philippine Embassy official. The so-called information or fresh evidence from another Filipina was conclusively investigated and proved to be untrue.

The forensic findings by Singapore's pathologists concerning the cause of death of Della Maga were challenged by some quarters in the Philippines. To resolve this, the Philippine and Singapore Governments established an independent Third Party Panel, comprising three renowned United States forensic experts selected by both Governments. Both Governments agreed to accept the findings of this Third Party Panel. After a thorough investigation, the Third Party Panel concluded that the relevant forensic findings by Singapore's pathologists were correct. The Philippine Government has accepted the conclusion of the Third Party Panel.

To ensure that the United Nations Commission on Human Rights is given the correct information, I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights under the agenda item relating to the report to the Special Rapporteur contained in document E/CN.4/1996/53.

(Signed) K. KESAVAPANY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative